

# Kansa language

**Kansa** is a Siouan language of the Dhegihan group once spoken by the Kaw people of Oklahoma. The last mother-tongue speaker, Walter Kekahbah, died in 1983.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## Classification

Kansa is a Dhegiha Siouan language, a broader category containing other languages such as Quapaw, Omaha, Ponca and Osage. This group of language falls under Mississippi Valley Siouan, which is grouped under the largest category of The Siouan Language Family.<sup>[4]</sup>

## History

The speakers of Kansa, known as the Kaw people, lived together with the Siouan-speakers in a united nation known as the Dhegiha Siouan group. This group was originally situated north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River and then moved west down the Ohio River. After this migration, the Dhegiha Siouan group split into five subgroups or tribes that were known as the Poncas, Osages, Omahas, Quapaws and the Kaws. Later on the Kaw migrated west of Missouri river and were called the "People of the Southwind."<sup>[5]</sup>

## Geographic distribution

The language was only spoken in Kansas and is no longer spoken since all of the speakers have died. Many of the members of the tribe now use English, but some are able to understand certain phrases or words in the language.<sup>[5]</sup>

Kansa	
	<i>KáꞤza</i>
Native to	United States
Region	Kansas, Oklahoma
Ethnicity	1,700 Kaw (2007) <sup>[1]</sup>
Extinct	1983, with the death of Walter Kekahbah <sup>[1]</sup>
Revival	a dozen claim to know it (2007) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	<div>Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Western Siouan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mississippi Valley<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dhegiha<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kansa–Osage<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Kansa</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	ksk
Linguist List	qlc ( <a href="http://multitree.org/codes/qlc">http://multitree.org/codes/qlc</a> ) Kansa-Osage
Glottolog	kans1243 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kans1243">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kans1243</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

Dialects:

The languages of the 5 tribes originating from the single Dhegiha group are extremely similar and have been considered as dialects of each other.

[4]

Scholarship and resources

Pioneering anthropologist and linguist James Owen Dorsey collected 604 Kansa words in the 1880s and also made about 25,000 entries in a Kansa-English dictionary which has never been published.<sup>[6]</sup> Dorsey also collected 24 myths, historical accounts, and personal letters from nine Kansa speakers.<sup>[7]</sup>

In 1974, linguist Robert L. Rankin met Kekahbah, Ralph Pepper (d. 1982), and Maud McCauley Rowe (d. 1978), the last surviving native speakers of Kansa. Rankin made extensive recordings of all three, especially Rowe, and his work over the next 31 years documented the language and helped the Kaw Nation to develop language learning materials.<sup>[8]</sup>

Phonology

Kansa has 29 consonants and 8 vowels.<sup>[9]</sup>

Consonants								
		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Postalveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	voiced	b	d				g	
	tense	pː	tː				kː	
	aspirated	pʰ	tʰ				kʰ	
	glottalized	pʼ	tʼ				kʼ	ʔ
<u>Fricative</u>	voiceless			s	ʃ		x	h
	voiced			z	ʒ		ɣ	
<u>Affricate</u>	voiced				dʒ			
	tense				tʃː			
	aspirated				tʃʰ			
	glottalized			tsʼ				
<u>Nasal</u>		m		n				
<u>Approximant</u>		w		l		j		

Vowels			
	Oral		Nasal
Close	i	y	ĩ
Mid	ɛ	o	õ
Open	a		ã

/ɛ/ is phonetically open-mid, whereas /o/ is phonetically close-mid. Additionally, /a/ and /o/ can also be pronounced as [ə] and [u] respectively.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Grammar

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Kansa does not use tenses or a plural of a noun. Unlike English, they position the verb at the end of a sentence and the verb contains details about who or what performs and receives the action. For example, *ni kó'bla* means "Water, I want it." Also, a word like *sí'ga* can mean "squirrel" or "squirrels."<sup>[4]</sup>

## Vocabulary

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The Kansa language has a lot of words similar to the other tribes originated from the Dhegiha Siouan group.<sup>[4]</sup> The following table lists compares cognates in Kansa and Osage:

English	Osage	Kansa
House	hcí	ci
Man	níhka	níka
Woman	wak'ó	wak'ó

## Language revitalization

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As of 2012, the Kaw Nation offers online language learning for Kansa second language speakers.<sup>[8]</sup>

The 2nd Annual Dhegiha Gathering in 2012 brought Kansa, Quapaw, Osage, Omaha and Ponca speakers together to share best practices in language revitalization.<sup>[11]</sup>

## References

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6. Unrau, William E. *The Kansa Indians: A History of the Wind People, 1673-1873*. Norman: U of OK Press, 1971, p. 12
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10. *Kanza Language for Families & Communities Volume 1 Online Edition* (<http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/coursemanual.pdf>) (PDF). Kaw Nation of Oklahoma. 2003.
11. "Dhegiha Gathering Agenda, 2012" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130606080511/http://www.osage-tribe.com/language/uploads/2ndAnnual-Agenda20120724.pdf>) (PDF). Archived from the original (<http://www.osage-tribe.com/language/uploads/2ndAnnual-Agenda20120724.pdf>) (PDF) on 2013-06-06. Retrieved 2012-09-22.

## External links

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- [Kansa language at the Kaw Nation](http://www.kawnation.com/langhome.html) (<http://www.kawnation.com/langhome.html>) (extensive online language study resources and texts)
  - [Kaw Indian Language \(Kansa, Kanza\)](http://www.native-languages.org/kansa.htm) (<http://www.native-languages.org/kansa.htm>)
  - [OLAC resources in and about the Kansa language](http://www.language-archives.org/language/ksk) (<http://www.language-archives.org/language/ksk>)
  - [English to Kansa Dictionary](http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/nglshknzdctnry.pdf) (<http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/nglshknzdctnry.pdf>)
  - [Kansa Talking Dictionary](http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/LangVocab/laingvocab.html) (<http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/LangVocab/laingvocab.html>)
  - [Kanza Language for Families and Communities](http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/coursemanual.pdf) (<http://www.kawnation.com/WebKanza/LangResources/coursemanual.pdf>)
  - [Examining the Development of Kaw Writing](http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu/ling.d7/files/sitefiles/research/papers/20/SBPL20_McBride.pdf) ([http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu/ling.d7/files/sitefiles/research/papers/20/SBPL20\\_McBride.pdf](http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu/ling.d7/files/sitefiles/research/papers/20/SBPL20_McBride.pdf))
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